In Act III, Hamlet’s increasingly mad behavior stood out the most to me. Acts I and II stirred up the revenge, while Act III saw the initiation of Hamlet’s plot. Hamlet’s manner was aggressive, disrespectful, and desperate.

At the start of Act III, Guildenstern states that Hamlet acts with a “crafty madness” (III. i. 8) and that he is “forcing his disposition” (III. i. 13). This is a good way of preparing the reader for Hamlet’s changing manner. Soon after, Hamlet says his famous soliloquy, which expresses doubt about life’s worth. He uses metaphors of slings and arrows to explain the suffering that comes with life, and he wonders if it is right to fight against a sea of troubles (III. i. 66-67). Not only does he question decisions made in life, but questions life itself. He condemns humans for cowardice in their caution caused by uncertainty about aspects of death. By believing in the cowardice of inaction, Hamlet sets himself up to take lots of action. He makes extreme behavior such as murder seem like acts that are honorable.

While in the presence of others, Hamlet’s words are less desperate and more absurd. Instead of being modest in the presence of the new king and his mother, he mutters sarcastic lines. On page 141, when the King asks Hamlet how he is, Hamlet replies, “Excellent, I’faith, of the chameleon’s dish. I eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so” (III. ii. 99-101). Later, Hamlet’s sarcasm grows in vulgarity. When Ophelia tells Hamlet he is keen, Hamlet treats the remark with a sexual intention and replies, “It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge” (III. ii. 273-274 pg. 153). By mistreating those who surround him, Hamlet displays his frustration and aggression that are results of his secret revenge. He is temperamental, and when Guildenstern denies a motive to lead Hamlet into a trap, Hamlet loses his cool. He accuses Guildenstern of treating him as an easily played pipe, then assures Guildenstern of his difficulty in being figured out.